

Lake County Examiner

VOL. XXVIII.

LAKEVIEW, LAKE COUNTY, OREGON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1907.

NO. 52



WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE
Christmas Night 1776

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

America's Most Memorable Christmas.

By ROBERTUS LOVE.

[Copyright, 1907, by Robertus Love.]

THE most memorable Christmas in American history was that of 1776, the day on which Washington crossed the Delaware.

As a matter of fact, Washington and his army crossed the Delaware four times during that same month, but it was the crossing on Christmas night that made vivid history. The picture of "Washington Crossing the Delaware," framed as a colored chromo or a black and white print, has been familiar to two generations of Americans. But how many of us know just why, how and where Washington crossed the Delaware, what bearing that movement had upon the destiny of America, who painted the famous picture from which the familiar chromo are made and where the original oil painting may be seen today?

Driven from Long Island and New York by the British, Washington's army pursued the British under Cornwallis. Washington reached Trenton Dec. 2 and began preparations for crossing over into Pennsylvania. Collecting all the boats he could find, he sent his army across the river on the night of the 19th, following with the rear of the army on the 20th, just as Cornwallis, as the historian Lossing puts it, "came down, with his pomp and parade, to the river bank."

Cornwallis extended his boats and crossed the river, capturing Philadelphia, the capital of the struggling colonies, and ending the Revolution in snow order. But the winter of 1776 had destroyed all the boats which he could not hide on the Pennsylvania shores for his own future use. The British general therefore decided to wait until the river froze, so that he could cross on the ice. Mild weather prevailed for a fortnight. In the meantime Washington had placed strong guards at several fords and ferries up and down the river, the enemy also posting detachments at important points on the New Jersey side. Washington, with a portion of his army, was encamped at Newtown, a little northeast of Bristol, Pa. The British garrison at Trenton consisted of about 1,500 Hessians and some British light horse under command of Colonel Rall, a gallant Hessian officer.

The capture of Philadelphia seemed so imminent that by advice of General Putnam, in command there, the Continental congress retired to Lancaster. The situation was highly critical. The time of service for which most of Washington's men had enlisted would expire within ten days, and unless money could be had for their payment few of them would remain in the field. Many citizens who had espoused the patriot cause became discouraged and went over to the enemy. Cornwallis was so positive that the "rebels" were on their last legs and the war practically over that he went to New York

with the intention to sail for England on leave of absence.

Washington felt that some decisive blow must be struck. The British must be shown that the Americans still had fight in them. Timid citizens in their homes must be encouraged by a demonstration of patriotic valor and military prowess. Accordingly Washington planned attacks at several points along the river, but he could not induce some of his subordinate commanders to co-operate with him. They could not cross the river, they said. But Washington could and did. He proposed to go over and give the Hessians at Trenton a Christmas after-math in the way of a day's work the morning after Christmas, knowing that the jolly Germans would be more or less demoralized by their bibulous manner of celebrating the anniversary.

Washington's troops at Newtown were chiefly New Englanders. He had about 2,400 men and twenty pieces of artillery. The weather had turned much colder toward Christmas, and on the afternoon of that day a chill storm of snow and sleet began, lasting through the night. Washington's troops marched to McConkey's ferry in the snowstorm. McConkey's was a riverside inn on the New Jersey bank of the Delaware about nine miles above Trenton. The boats previously hidden by the Americans were collected at this

point, opposite McConkey's house, and at dusk the soldiers began crossing. Everybody knows, of course, that "the river was full of floating ice," but Colonel Glover and his fishermen soldiers from Marblehead did not mind that. They knew how to guide boats amid cakes of ice. These Massachusetts fishermen were placed in charge of the boats.

The plan of Washington was to reach Trenton by 5 o'clock in the morning and catch the Hessians sleeping off their Christmas potations. He counted upon getting the whole army across by midnight. Owing to the delay caused by the ice and the storm it was 3 o'clock in the morning when the last boat load of patriots reached the Jersey shore. By 4 o'clock the force was formed ready for the march upon Trenton. Colonel Henry Knox had brought over his cannon on the frail flatboats, with horses to pull the pieces along the road.

General Washington crossed the river a little before midnight. The inmates of McConkey's house were astir practically all night, brewing big jugs of hot and steaming punch, which the cold and weary Continental officers drank with eager zest. It is related that early in the morning hours Washington himself stepped into the inn and found some of his young officers inclined to loiter by the fire and indulge in extra potations. There was more serious work on hand, Washington, it is said, drank just one stout "snifter" and ordered his officers to be about their business. McConkey's house still stands, and the place is known now as Washington's Crossing.

Washington divided his forces into two bodies, one to march down the river road and attack the enemy from the west, the other to enter the town from the north. The commander instructed all his officers to set their watches by his, so that the attack might be made simultaneously at every point. It was 8 o'clock when the enemy's outposts were encountered and driven in, firing from behind trees and fences as they ran.

Colonel Rall had been up all night, with other officers, carousing and playing cards at the house of a Tory. Though the attack was made three hours later than had been intended, it was still practically a surprise. Rall buckled on his sword and gallantly tried to rally his demoralized forces, but it was too late. Already the light horse and 500 Hessians had taken flight and escaped. Knox had planted his cannon to sweep the principal streets, and the attack from all points was

furios. Colonel Rall fell mortally wounded, and a little later he surrendered his sword to Washington. The American commander took nearly a thousand prisoners, with many stands of arms, cannon and other equipment. The victory was complete. Cornwallis deferred his trip to England, remaining here to surrender to Washington at Yorktown five years later.

The next day Washington's army re-crossed the river, taking the Hessian prisoners to Newtown. On the 29th, his forces having been increased by the arrival of other troops, he made the passage of the Delaware for the fourth time in a month, recrossing Trenton until forced to retire to Princeton by the maneuvers of Cornwallis. In crossing and recrossing the river and fighting the battle of Trenton Washington lost only seven men. Two were killed, four were wounded and one frozen to death.

The famous picture "Washington Crossing the Delaware" was painted in 1851 by Emanuel Leutze, who was born in Wurttemberg in 1816 and died at Washington in 1868, having settled permanently in America. Leutze painted several other American historical scenes. The Washington picture, an immense canvas to which no other



Sioux Mother and Child

reproduction can do justice, now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York city, where it may be seen free of charge by any American patriot—or by any Hessian or British visitor, for that matter. The great painting was presented to the museum ten years ago by John S. Kennedy. It is a matter of congratulation that this artistic representation of an inspiring incident connected with America's most historic Christmas now belongs practically to the people of America, one and all.

Christmas on Christmas Island. They never have any "white" Christmas on Christmas Island. The thermometer never falls below 70 and never rises above 90 in the shade.

Christmas island lies about 250 miles southeast of the western extremity of Java. It is in the Indian ocean and belongs to Great Britain, having been annexed in 1888. This interesting little bit of land in midsea appears to have been originally a coral reef, which by volcanic forces has been raised so high that at its highest point it sticks out of the water 1,600 feet. In shape it is an irregular quadrilateral. It has an area of about twenty square miles. The British have formed a settlement on the island for the development of the phosphate beds, which are said to be rich. This material is used for fertilizer.

A globe trotter who spent last Christmas very appropriately on Christmas Island says: "Christmas morning I bathed in the sea. Christmas afternoon, dressed in white flannel, I played tennis. It is always summer there. A pure, cool breeze always blows from the southeast. In January the fresh fruits and flowers and vegetables are as plentiful as during July or August in the United States. Christmas island is a little paradise nine miles wide and about ten miles long."



Ute Mother and Child Ready for Santa Claus

Christmas With Lo, the Poor Indian.

MANY of the Indians who still keep up their tribal existence are Christians. To them as to the white people Christmas is an important anniversary, but they celebrate it in their own way. This way would not be approved by certain Christian denominations of white people because it includes as the chief feature a dance.

The southwestern Indian tribes have a special fondness for all sorts of ceremonial dances. When white people dance they do it for the aesthetic pleasure of the performance, the poetry of motion, so to speak. Not so with the Indians. Every dance has a deep significance to them. When they assemble for their Christmas observance they begin by praying for rain and bountiful crops.

Then follows the dance. This is the only dance in which the women are permitted to take part. The men and women form in opposite lines and start up a song, their bodies swaying in rhythm. Then they break up into groups and dance toward each other with a hippity-hop step, holding their bodies rigid.

The next movement is to form a circle and dance around a Christmas tree hung with articles which, according to the missionaries, are the gifts of Santa Claus to good Indians. The Indians kneel and pray in front of an altar during the performance.

When Santa Claus visits the Indian papoose on the plains he does not find stockings in which to deposit his presents. As a rule, the little Indian in the tepee does not wear stockings, for the first year or two at any rate. The baby is strapped to a board, its body wrapped in warm skins and only its head sticking out, so that it can cry without being cramped for space.

Frequently the papoose takes its naps in an upright position, its mother leaning the baby board against the tepee pole.

On Christmas eve Santa Claus steals into the tepee and lays beside the sleeping papoose its Christmas presents. These are not so numerous or so costly as the white baby's presents, but to the little bronze baby they are just as good. Nearly always the Indian baby gets things of bright colors. Indians, big and little, are particularly fond of garish hues. A red necktie, a blue ribbon, a yellow scarf or a stick of striped candy may be the selection of Santa Claus, but a string of shells or beads, the tooth of an elk or the claw of a bear is more likely to be the papoose's present.

When papoose wakes up and finds its gifts it is just as happy as the richest white child in the land.

A Disappointing Feature. "Was there any disappointing feature about your appearance as Santa Claus?"

"Well, rather! The nose of my false face melted off!"

